

Teachers Resource Guide

Jane Dier Transcript

Who are you and why are you at Jamestown (or in Virginia)? What year is it?

I am Jane Dier, just arrived last week, with all the other girls aboard the Warwick. Let's have a little chat. Mistress Kate says I should try to be less shy, to get to know my new neighbours. Mistress Kate has been like a mother to me. My own mother passed on this spring, giving birth to my poor little sister, who died the next day. Then my father couldn't find work as a weaver. I could have moved in with my older sister, but I wouldn't want to be a burden. Yes, 1621 was a dreadful year for our family. But then our pastor read me the broadside on a shop wall, about the Virginia colony's need for women to marry the settlers. Of course, I worried about Father, but he actually encouraged me to go. "Jane, pet," said he, "You can sew and brew and bake and spin. Your mother would be proud to know you're helping England's new colony by using those skills."

Describe your daily activities

Jamestown certainly is different than London - thank goodness! No more crowds, no more foul air from thousands of chimneys burning that filthy coal, no more going hungry because everything's so expensive. I shouldn't boast, but Mistress Kate says she is amazed how much a city girl knows about running a household. I can even make butter and cheese! She says I'm quick and bright and cheerful, and that she'll tell that to any likely fellow who comes asking about me. Oh, I'm blushing just thinking about this! Mistress Kate says that she would indenture me herself, that I would make an excellent servant. But I could only be an indentured servant if I couldn't find a husband. The Virginia Company has said that we maids were sent over to be brides. And, truth be told, I do want to be a wife and mother, with my own little house and garden, and maybe a cow and some chickens.

What do you think about Jamestown and Virginia since you arrived?

I had heard about the New World, and that is exactly what Virginia is for me. Everything is new! New animals like the 'possum and raccoon, and new trees like dogwood and redbud. (Mistress Kate says, "Just wait 'til the spring, when they are in bloom." I was just a little girl when Princess Pocahontas was presented at court to our King James. I never got to see her, but now I see her kin here at Jamestown. Some of our people call them savages, but Master Hugh says they have been here a lot longer than we have and we should respect them. He is worried because so many settlers have claimed land to grow tobacco. How will the Virginia Indians feel about that? For now we have peace, and I pray it continues. I want my future to be a happy one.

What expectations do you have for your future?

Sometimes Mistress Kate and I sit by the fire, discussing my future. I'm a little worried. No matter what she says, I know that there's more to attracting a husband than just being a hard worker. I look at some of the other girls, like Bessie Browne, who always seem to know the right things to say to a man. But Mistress Kate says that dainty white hands and giggles won't mean much to the right sort of man. They didn't mean anything to her husband. She and Master Hugh have been married almost ten years. Master Hugh overheard us talking, and he agreed with his wife. As a matter of fact, he has been singing my praises all over town, to all the worthy men he

knows. I was so grateful! Master Hugh and Mistress Kate will make sure that I'm the bride of an honest and industrious man, the kind advertised in that broadsheet back in London.

Items that would identify Jane Dier:

- Needle, thread, thimble and scissors
- Iron cooking pot and chamber pot
- Indian arrow, tomahawk and stone knife
- Candle and holder, mop cap and apron